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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000345

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/RPM

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [KPKO](#) [KV](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA SHARES USG CONCERNS ABOUT KFOR FORCE LEVELS
REF: STATE 26179

Classified by: Economic-Political Counselor J. Dean Yap for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

(C) Polchief discussed reftel points March 24 with Thomas Schnoell, MFA Unit Chief for Southeast Europe. Schnoell said the GOA, like the USG, is concerned that some KFOR contributing states are discussing withdrawing troops from Kosovo unilaterally. He said the GOA was surprised and disappointed by Spain's announced decision to withdraw all of its KFOR forces. The Western Balkans is Austria's top military priority, and Austria has no plans to reduce its KFOR presence, he said. Polchief emphasized the importance of maintaining the "in together, out together" commitment among KFOR allies, noting that Austria would be among those countries faced with an onerous burden if others pulled out unilaterally. Schnoell agreed, and said the GOA had not had the opportunity to raise the issue in EU fora, but would speak against unilateral withdrawal when the chance arose.
KILNER